

MUNICIPALIZATION AND DECENTRALIZATION POLICIES: INFLUENCES ON
EDUCATION

*POLÍTICAS DE MUNICIPALIZAÇÃO E DESCENTRALIZAÇÃO: INFLUÊNCIAS NA
EDUCAÇÃO*

*POLÍTICAS DE MUNICIPALIZACIÓN Y DESCENTRALIZACIÓN: INFLUENCIAS EN
LA EDUCACIÓN*



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ABSTRACT: The objective of the article is to establish a reflection on the process of municipalization and decentralization, as well as all the legal frameworks enacted, in relation to Brazilian education, during the 1980s and 1990s, to think about how early childhood education, primary and secondary education, in addition to higher education, were modified and adjusted in the period covered here, these being elements for various public debates. We also propose to think about the criteria used in the creation of legislation and evaluation during the governments of Fernando Henrique Cardoso and Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, bringing for analysis points of continuities and discontinuities in Brazilian basic education, in addition to considering the weaknesses that existed decades after all these movements which aimed to improve education networks in accordance with Perdonatti and Lemes (2022).

KEYWORDS: Municipalization of education. Educational public policy. Education Management.

RESUMO: O objetivo do artigo é estabelecer uma reflexão sobre o processo de municipalização e descentralização, bem como todos os marcos legais promulgados, em relação à educação brasileira, durante as décadas de 1980 e 1990, para pensar como a educação infantil, o ensino fundamental e médio, além do ensino superior, foram sendo modificados e ajustados no período aqui recortado, sendo estes elementos para diversos debates públicos. Propomos também pensar sobre os critérios utilizados na criação de legislação e avaliação durante os governos de Fernando Henrique Cardoso e Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, trazendo para análise pontos de continuidades e discontinuidades na educação básica brasileira, além de considerarmos as fragilidades existentes décadas após todas essas movimentações as quais visavam uma melhora nas redes de ensino, nos termos apresentados por Perdonatti e Lemes (2022).

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Municipalização da educação. Política pública educacional. Gestão educacional.

RESUMEN: El objetivo del artículo es establecer una reflexión sobre el proceso de municipalización y descentralización, así como sobre todos los marcos legales promulgados, en relación a la educación brasileña, durante las décadas de 1980 y 1990, para pensar cómo funciona la educación infantil, primaria y secundaria. La educación, además de la educación superior, fueron modificadas y ajustadas en el período que aquí nos ocupa, siendo estos elementos de diversos debates públicos. También proponemos reflexionar sobre los criterios utilizados en la creación de legislación y evaluación durante los gobiernos de Fernando Henrique Cardoso y Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, trayendo para el análisis puntos de continuidades y discontinuidades en la educación básica brasileña, además de considerar las debilidades que existieron décadas después de todos estos movimientos que apuntaban a mejorar las redes educativas, de acuerdo con Perdonatti y Lemes (2022).

PALABRAS CLAVE: Municipalización de la educación. Política pública educativa. Gestión educativa.

Introduction

Municipalization and decentralization of Brazilian basic education, as means to ensure public systems capable of addressing local particularities, present particular characteristics related to education and warrant careful examination. Both processes not only trigger a new structural organization but also impose new questions regarding the concept and quality of public basic education. We aim to provide a brief historical overview of this process, and in this framework, our hypothesis is that these processes create new intricacies and characteristics in public basic education by seeking new structures for its operationalization, in addition to a selective condition, considering that in past decades, the vast majority of the population residing in municipalities had little to no access to school, and the conditions for remaining in the school environment were precarious. Regarding the current regulation of the State, Perdonatti and Lemes (2022) seek to address how responsibilities have been established to modify this historical context.

In this scenario, where public policies were sporadic and did not adequately address the most vulnerable population, it is necessary to closely examine how the developments in municipalization and decentralization of the educational system impact basic and public education in Brazil, measuring its quality, generating data and information, as well as means to better serve the population with more comprehensive public policies. Of course, we must also consider the many remnants of the historical and social context that still permeate different spaces within Brazilian society. However, the main objective of this article is to reflect on the implementation of legal frameworks, plans, and evaluative instruments, their contradictions, and key moments related to modifications applied to these laws and plans, considering these elements necessary in the composition of various analytical and understanding tools regarding changes in Early Childhood Education, Elementary, and Secondary Education over the past 30 years. In this context, Perdonatti and Lemes (2022) not only address decentralization but also propose an examination of the actors and public agents involved in monitoring the developments of municipalization over the years.

Public Policy, Municipalization, and Decentralization

When discussing decentralization and public policies aimed at education, it is important to clarify the general and specific definitions of this topic as it pertains to the segment in which

we intend to conduct our reflection. We reference Oliveira (n.d.), who defines, based on the analysis of actions and activities, that the State, by implementing its set of programs, whether through entirely public apparatus or through private sector participation in its execution, alters the landscape of citizens' rights—such as access and retention in school—in a broader context, encompassing social, cultural, ethnic, and economic dimensions. An important note regarding public policy in education: we specifically understand these as actions and activities established by governments with the aim of ensuring access to education for all citizens, from which we develop the scope of analysis for this article.

From an institutional perspective, municipalization, according to Oliveira (n.d.), considers the possibility for municipalities to mobilize their resources to ensure the provision of services to the local community. Thus, the conditions necessary for municipalization are:

[...] the end of centralizing legislation, appropriate tax policies; ongoing technical support programs for municipalities; the end of conventional administration; the presence of qualified human resources at the local level; management capacity; participatory planning in the locality; effective participation of the people, not just formal (Oliveira, s/d, s/p, our translation).

In this view, the establishment of characteristics distinct from patrimonialism, as mentioned by Teixeira (1956), presents a problem within Brazilian society that could be considered overcome when considering the actions related to the democratic state and its current legislation. However, municipalization, as a process of unification and identity for a people, begins to encompass the landscape of citizens' rights, including those who acquire an awareness: seeking education, betting on education and social justice as means to overcome social and educational privileges once reserved for only a segment of society. For this reason, the understanding of the municipalization process differs from "**prefeiturização**" (municipalization centralization), which centralized all local actions in the figure of the municipal mayor, their advisors, and secretaries.

Furthermore, within the realm of public policy and associated with municipalization, we must consider the process of decentralization, which ensures autonomy for each municipality and aims to expand local powers through democratic practice. In other words, decentralization is:

[...] a constant sharing of power within the governmental system, carried out through the reallocation of decision-making and executive competences, as well as the resources necessary to finance them. The fundamentals of the

decentralization process are: more gradualism, more flexibility, more transparency, more progressiveness, and more social control mechanisms (Oliveira, s/d, s/p, our translation)

Thus, social control is established through the formation of local councils organized with various segments of civil society, acting as partners, overseers, and guides for public actions. The use of resources is committed to meeting the needs of those seeking social services, whether in education or health, which are part of the democratic structure. However, historical delays are still reflected in Brazilian society; there remains a need for change, such as in education, to create a school system that addresses the real needs of individuals, that is, the majority of the population.

Given this context, educational decentralization emerges as a development resulting from the possibility of empowering or organizing local forces with a proactive vision and, beyond their locality, as a way to counter the persistent paternalism. In dialogue, Teixeira's (1956) observations highlight the need for educational reform, which relies on a decentralization policy capable of managing the local educational system, where each level of authority works in conjunction with others. For instance, at the municipal level, it is essential to establish a local system with its characteristics; at the state level, the responsibility lies in assisting municipalities and managing secondary, technical, and higher education schools, in coordination with the federation; and at the federal level, it involves overseeing secondary and higher education schools, research of various kinds, and supporting other federative entities.

In parallel, the establishment of educational autonomy, as asserted by Teixeira (1956), should occur through autonomous school systems that guarantee their local characteristics and better address their needs. In this context, municipal councils serve as oversight and accountability mechanisms for the public sector, directing their demands and monitoring municipal service delivery. This approach creates a method for managing resources using clear mechanisms to ensure that funding achieves its intended purpose.

Demands between the 1980s and 1990s Regarding Education

During the 1980s and 1990s, significant legal milestones were established concerning the structure of Brazilian public education. These legal frameworks clarified the importance of education as a social right and outlined how it would be structured to serve society as a public policy.

Among these legal milestones are: (i) the 1988 Constitution, considered a landmark in Brazilian democratic construction; (ii) the promulgation of the Statute of the Child and Adolescent (ECA) in 1990, which guarantees broader access to education; (iii) the Law of Guidelines and Bases (LDB) of 1996, which reinforces the importance of access to education in all areas; and, finally, Constitutional Amendment No. 14/1996, which created the Fund for Maintenance and Development of Elementary Education and Valuation of Teaching (FUNDEF) (Brazil, 1996). In addition to establishing significant changes, this set of laws opens space for reflections on societal demands and provides conditions for new laws and complementary actions.

Decentralization in Brazil over the past two decades has taken the form of the municipalization of education, particularly in the State of São Paulo. This process was triggered by the implementation of the Fund for Maintenance and Development of Elementary Education and Valuation of Teaching (FUNDEF) – Law No. 9,424/96 (Brasil, 1996b), which came into effect on January 1, 1998. This law provided resources to municipalities through constitutionally allocated education funds. Municipalities had the opportunity to access these resources by adopting the municipalization proposal in accordance with the number of students in the education stage defined by the legislation (Perdonatti; Lemes, 2022, p.10, our translation).

It is important to highlight that prior to this municipalization movement, as indicated by Perdonatti and Lemes (2022), there was, in the 1980s, a significant national effort to combat illiteracy, which affected the most socially vulnerable populations, as most people lacked access to early Education. In the 1990s, another educational issue emerged: the expansion of Secondary Education and the related quality concerns—a debate that continues into recent times, including the context of its reform in 2018—and student retention during this educational stage. Secondary Education plays a crucial role in the formation of citizens, as this period represents a unique phase where the young individual must choose between practical or intellectual work, and this stage must provide means to support both types of Education, preparing the young individual to follow their chosen professional path.

In the 1980s and 1990s, the quality of Education also became a major topic of political focus. Another change during this period was the transformation of the school context, where students began to be seen as active participants in the educational process rather than mere clients, as they were viewed by private institutions. These two decades were marked by the process of redemocratization, debates on citizenship, and the formation of new social values, which led to more detailed discussions about political and economic power. The redemocratization process, which began in Brazil in 1985, resulted in a new format for Education: now decentralized and divided among federal, state, and municipal levels, with the goal of modernizing public Education to make it universal for all segments of Brazilian society.

According to Libâneo *et al.* (2012), education policies in Brazil are established with each government, though some common points are set at the outset. These common points primarily include the management structure to be implemented and the types of funding to be applied through various projects. Examples include the content that will constitute the school curriculum, the assessment of these elements, and teacher training. The organization of these guiding points has clear objectives, such as reducing grade repetition and school dropout rates, as well as providing elements to ensure better conditions for children and young people.

Regarding the provision of elements to improve school conditions, an example is the Leve Leite Program, created in the 1990s in São Paulo, which began offering milk to students in municipal schools with the aim of ensuring nutrition and child development. Milk was provided to students with a school attendance rate of over 90%. Another public policy aimed at maintaining school attendance is the Bolsa Família Program, which provided benefits to vulnerable families with children who attended school daily, utilizing the socioeconomic profile of the student's family. These are examples of various actions related to maintaining children's attendance in the school environment during basic education.

In alignment with the indications of Libâneo *et al.* (2012), and according to Durhan (2010), during the government of Fernando Henrique Cardoso (1995 to 2003) – known as the FHC government – several educational public policies were implemented, including the Fund for Maintenance and Development of Elementary Education and Valuation of Teaching (FUNDEF). This fund underwent adaptations and adjustments during the government of Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva (2003 to 2011) – known as the Lula government – reaching a new institutional level with the creation of the Fund for Development and Maintenance of Basic Education and Valuation of Education Professionals (FUNDEB). FUNDEB replaced FUNDEF and aimed to restore the concept of basic education while strengthening social control. Abreu

(2010) highlights changes in early childhood education, for example, which was included in the allocation of resources as a result of the strong advocacy of the National Campaign for the Right to Education. This expanded the scope from the previous model to encompass all basic education, including Early Childhood Education, Elementary Education, and Secondary Education. The participation of states and municipalities in the composition of the fund was increased from 15% to 20%, redistributing resources to those with lower revenue.

In analyzing the contemporary context of government policies related to municipalization and decentralization, Perdonatti and Lemes (2022) discuss the weaknesses arising from a lack of strategic posture and continuity on the part of the State. This issue is attributed to the perception of each current government, which fails to fully address the conditions necessary to provide a more equitable education that effectively meets the demands of basic education. This is due to the establishment of more regulatory practices aimed at control, which undermines the role of public agents and actors involved, even though they are impacted by the implementation of this new decentralizing policy.

Expansion of Public Education: Educational Quality and Evaluation Systems

Regarding the expansion of primary and public education, the 1990s also marked a significant development: the debate on measuring educational quality. This issue led to numerous debates about how assessments should be conducted, what evaluations should be designed, and which instruments should be adopted to generate data capable of providing information on the quality of learning.

According to Libâneo *et al.* (2012), debates on educational quality reveal a contradiction in public policies that should ensure student success in school while also holding teachers accountable for educational failure. This characteristic emerged prominently during the 1990s, being reflected both by society and some governments. Reflecting on the 1980s, considering a welfare state might be an interesting alternative, provided there is already a good socioeconomic structure with minimal social inequality—a reality contrary to Brazil, which was politically restructuring and faced immense social disparities. However, a significant observation is that the 1990s were fruitful in developing measurable public educational policies. In 1995, the regulation and improvement of the Basic Education Assessment System (SAEB) and entry into the International Student Assessment Program (PISA) elevated Brazilian basic education to a

new level, as both programs focus on collecting data related to educational quality. According to Durhan (2010),

It is often said, and it is true, that Brazil once had an excellent public education system (especially at the gymnasium and high school levels) and that student performance has declined alarmingly. However, it is important to consider that at that time, the extremely high rates of grade repetition and school dropout (as well as the old admission exams for the gymnasium) functioned as increasingly fine sieves, which prematurely excluded the vast majority of students from less educated and lower-income families from the education system (p. 164, our translation).

Here, it is worth questioning: how can one consider that the education was of high quality if there were no indices, alongside a significant amount of dropouts and failures? This scenario highlights the need to reflect on which methodologies should be used to ensure learning and student retention across different education levels and which instruments can effectively measure educational quality. From this context, we can see the importance of creating public policies that guarantee the inclusion of different social strata and that can mitigate opportunity disparities within the school environment. Thus, it is interesting to note the search for new alternatives. However, according to Perdonatti and Lemes (2022), the role of the regulatory State shows deficiencies in program development, meaning that the Brazilian educational process still bears remnants resembling a production process, where students become alienated during the learning process, mainly due to being immersed in an educational system that still reproduces restrictive elements that are of little significance in strengthening knowledge production.

Considering the observations of Libâneo *et al.* (2012) and Durhan (2010), we must address issues related to the distribution conducted by the State. According to Perdonatti and Lemes (2022), there is a division of responsibilities among the federal entities, with a primary focus on municipalities. Perdonatti and Lemes (2022) highlight:

In the case of education, decentralization implemented as government policies rather than state policies often proves to be inefficient, as it does not involve local entities in decision-making. These entities, not recognizing themselves in these proposals, show resistance to implementing such policies, either due to defending their own interests or because the training programs offered do not meet local specificities. Consequently, the responsibility of those involved at different levels tends to become inadequate, thus compromising the process of schooling and learning outcomes (p. 10, our translation).

This government policy movement, as previously highlighted, demonstrates the fragility in the continuity of policy developments, primarily due to initial resistances, which make the process more sluggish and inefficient, failing to ensure adequate conditions for decentralization. Additionally, we must consider the complexity of this process, which involves various elements: local political positioning, technical criteria, and state support in organizing entities and deliberative bodies, such as the approach of public services to the population.

Nevertheless, over two decades later, the advantages of decentralization have not materialized efficiently, indicating that there is much still to be built in terms of conceptualizing the topic, clarity in the distribution of state functions, and recognition of the inherent properties of the application location—territory and its territoriality (Perdonatti; Lemes, 2022, p. 11, our translation).

Arguments in favor of decentralization and municipalization aimed to consider the profile of localities to address demands more effectively and reduce state bureaucracy. In the context of education, we should have seen various stimuli to innovations in educational and pedagogical practices, catering to specific audiences and facilitating public engagement in discussions about public services. However, as highlighted by Perdonatti and Lemes (2022), this issue was not widely addressed in localities that had attempted to adapt to new procedures for decentralization.

Quality of Education and Its Implications

During the FHC administration, education had to adapt to “market needs,” as many theorists have noted. In reality, this adjustment to the market was driven by the need to meet emerging demands. To address the increasing need for professionals with specific technological knowledge, the government made greater investments in courses focusing on these themes. On the other hand, the Lula administration, as indicated by Abreu (2010), implemented, adjusted, and modified the actions of its predecessor, aiming to reach new levels. However, as highlighted by Perdonatti and Lemes (2022), this practice is linked to both administrations, showing a subtle continuity, but also considerable changes in some cases, such as in higher education. According to Abreu (2010), the modifications delineate specific characteristics, aiming to serve a broader and more vulnerable range of social layers.

Despite various actions related to changes brought by decentralization, issues related to certain educational segments still drive the debate, with the ongoing aim of seeking new

adjustments to overcome serious issues related to continuity and retention in the school environment. An example of this is considering how one stage of education impacts another.

As Durhan (2010) states:

The development of Secondary Education depends, for example, on the increase in enrollments in Primary Education and, especially, on the reduction of repetition and school dropout in the early grades, allowing for an increase in the number of students completing the 8th grade. In turn, the expansion of higher education depends on the increase in the number of enrollments and graduates from secondary education (p. 154, our translation).

Durhan (2010) presents a scenario that still reflects the policies developed in the 1980s and 1990s, with strong remnants even after the creation of various public policies aimed at counterbalancing this scenario in Brazilian education. Observing the analysis of Perdonatti and Lemes (2022), we perceive few modifications. For instance, Secondary Education, despite undergoing reform in 2018, remains a significant challenge for any government, becoming even more evident in the post-pandemic period concerning the need to stimulate interest among young people and to substantially modify not only the structure but also the methods of teaching.

According to Teixeira (1956), among the most critical challenges:

[...] undoubtedly, the system of secondary schools will rise, intended to continue the general culture from primary school and to begin specialization in practical and industrial work or intellectual work, all of which are culturally and socially equivalent, as students will be distributed according to interests and aptitudes for forming the workforce and middle-level positions, whether in intellectual or practical occupations (s/p, our translation).

As previously mentioned, Secondary Education plays a fundamental and crucial role in the formation of citizens. During this period, young individuals experience adolescence, a time of significant changes. Developing citizens can choose the paths they wish to follow, both personally and professionally. They may decide between practical or intellectual work, technical courses, or university education. Therefore, this stage of education must provide opportunities to meet various types of training needs. Additionally, this moment of choice is delicate concerning the characteristics that educational training can offer in shaping society. There are possibilities through technical education—aimed at meeting the labor market's need for qualified workers—and higher education, which focuses on academic production,

encompassing cultural and scientific training. Both intersect with different issues experienced by society.

Regarding Technical Education, it is important to highlight some pertinent issues related to its context, as noted by Durhan (2010). The focus of technical education is to prepare a skilled workforce capable of meeting labor market demands, thereby addressing existing gaps in industry and enhancing its competitiveness. However, the quality of public technical courses often matches or exceeds that of private secondary schools. In this regard:

[...] instead of producing highly skilled and well-paid workers and technicians to meet the new needs of the labor market, these courses have become pre-university courses serving a privileged minority (Durhan, 2010, p. 171, our translation).

Another point to consider reflects the excellent structure of federal institutes and other state technical schools, which have increasingly ensured greater university enrollment among young people. While entry into higher education is not necessarily problematic, the focus of technical education often becomes detached from its original purpose. This situation unfolds as follows: slots in technical programs are increasingly contested by middle-class students from private elementary schools; subsequently, many young people, after completing their technical training, go directly into universities, failing to address the labor market needs.

According to Durhan (2010), technical education, secondary education, and higher education do not fully meet the labor market demands, despite the formation of a cohort of young and adult graduates. Additionally, a significant number of individuals either do not complete secondary education or, if they do, possess unsatisfactory knowledge as measured by evaluation systems. It is important to note that higher professional qualification leads to better market insertion and positions, as well as appropriate remuneration. Nevertheless, the major challenge remains in organizing technical education effectively.

Building on the observations made by Durhan (2010) regarding Higher Education, it is essential to consider the concepts proposed by Teixeira (1956), who, in the 1950s and 1960s, emphasized that this educational stage should encourage a variety of curricula and professionals with diverse human and material resources for various types of specialization. Besides the range of offerings, special attention should be given to the training of educators—currently undervalued—to ensure they continue to implement educational practices that address societal changes.

In light of Teixeira's (1956) framework and its connection to Durhan's (2010) work, it is essential to revisit how Higher Education is structured in the country and understand the dynamics between the public and private sectors.

Regarding higher education, analyzing the relative growth of the public and private sectors is necessary. The relationship between these sectors remained relatively stable from 1933 to 1965, with the public sector predominating. In 1965, with the onset of the military government, the private sector began to grow more vigorously than the public sector, surpassing it in enrollment numbers by 1970. From this point, the private sector continued to dominate until 1980 and experienced a slight decline between 1985 and 1995. The Fernando Henrique administration was marked by a new expansion of the private sector, which continued to grow until 2008, albeit at a slower pace during the Lula administration (Durhan, 2010, p. 160, our translation).

This brief account illustrates how the sector fluctuates depending on how university spots are filled and by whom. The organization of Higher Education concerning private institutions was subject to evaluation by the Federal Council of Education, which later became the National Council of Education. This body was primarily responsible for assessing and accrediting private institutions and their courses. State Councils evaluated public state institutions. The public debate on the quality of this sector intensified in 1996 with the creation of the National Course Exam (ENC), commonly known as "*Provão*," as previously institutions were only assessed at the time of their course creation, as noted by Abreu (2010).

We can draw a parallel between the realities of basic education and higher education, noting that both sectors increasingly address the issue of educational quality, despite their growing ability to meet demands. Additionally, it is evident how the legislation of the 1980s and 1990s has been setting changes for the subsequent years, driven by public debates in society at large and within the educational sectors themselves.

Regarding Higher Education, we can establish a dialogue between the works of Abreu (2010) and Durhan (2010). Both emphasize the importance of expanding enrollment opportunities and providing broad access to universities, thereby enabling professional development and access to the cultural framework offered by academia. However, Durhan (2010) points out that educational funding directed towards private institutions, which are considered exemplary, aligns with the vision and practices of public policies during the FHC administration. This suggests a gradual and slow opening of access through scholarships or educational financing, with significant criticism directed at the actions taken during the two terms of the Lula administration, although there is no mention of subsequent implications.

On the other hand, Abreu (2010) focuses more closely on the legal milestones of the Lula administration, highlighting the increased openness and dialogue with the National Campaign for the Right to Education. This includes the creation of initiatives to support university enrollment, such as the University for All Program (ProUni) and the Support Program for Restructuring and Expansion Plans of Federal Universities (Reuni), as well as Law No. 10.861 of April 14, 2004, and Decree No. 5.773 of May 9, 2006, which legally establish and regulate the National Student Performance Assessment Exam (ENADE), leading to growth and enhancement in the evaluation of higher education (Brasil, 2004; 2006).

In this context, considering the large-scale expansion of private higher education is worth examining, particularly regarding the continuity and retention of students in the educational environment. It is crucial to remember the importance of the interconnectedness between educational stages, where one depends on the other to meet demand effectively. Based on Durhan (2010), we can hypothesize that the holistic education of an individual—encompassing early childhood education through to higher education—is interconnected. We propose the following hypothesis: if an individual has experienced quality education throughout their schooling, this is likely to be reflected in all stages of their education, whereas those who have experienced inadequate education are likely to continue within the same context until the end of their education or abandonment of schooling.

Final considerations

So far, we have presented a brief overview of municipalization and decentralization, reflecting on how these processes, which encompassed policies for the universalization of education, drew upon the political context of each municipality to provide, based on a theoretical concept, conditions for autonomy to address the specific demands of each locality, with a primary focus on respecting regional particularities. This process is distinct from municipal centralization, which consolidates power in the hands of a specific mayor. In contrast, municipalization involves the establishment of local councils for smaller municipalities and even implementing sub-offices of the mayor's office in larger cities, such as the Subprefectures in São Paulo.

We can consider that this political transformation did not entirely eliminate the remnants of patrimonialism, but it does offer, in the long term, the potential and scope for future changes.

It is important to note that councils have proven to be crucial spaces for demanding and overseeing government agencies and municipalities that needed to establish autonomy.

As a reflection of this process, during the 1980s and 1990s, significant legal frameworks for education were created, resulting in considerable adjustments. For example, early childhood education became integral to basic education and lost its charitable character. There were also redefinitions and conceptual improvements in primary and secondary education, as well as in higher education. Both decades marked the beginning of changes that would later bring about structural modifications in Brazilian education, breaking a cycle of low retention due to high repetition and dropout rates. The context of producing and implementing public policies elevated education to a new level and introduced discussions about the quality of education. Thus, we can consider that the existence of distinct quality benchmarks, whether for each municipality, state, or between social classes, contributes to discursive plurality and new studies and research, as well as the implementation of new public policies.

Large-scale assessment systems and methods, ranging from their creation to their implementation, are not without controversy, but they generate a vast amount of data and information regarding learning outcomes and serve as a gauge for the effectiveness of public policies adopted. These data also aid in understanding educational changes over time. For instance, technical education, which initially focused on training to meet labor market demands, now directs its audience toward higher education, addressing a different population than initially intended. Despite this disparity, there has been little debate on the possibilities for adjusting or reinterpreting the concept of technical education.

The theoretical conflict between government policies, which, from certain perspectives, aimed to generate public policies capable of serving society and fulfilling established government plans, becomes apparent in this analysis of a specific timeline. Even though there are moments of discontinuity and partisan divergence, the social changes that occurred, the modernization of legislation, and the improvements that benefitted less favored sectors of society cannot be disregarded. Thus, it is evident that there is a need to remain vigilant on the topics discussed here. There is no end, but there is always room for the opportunity for change, deepening, and new questions that each political, social, and cultural moment brings to light, offering new perspectives. To review in order to rethink and evolve.

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